This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

UNCLAS PRAGUE 001568

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

STATE FOR EB/CIP (GROSS), EUR/ERA, EUR/UBI
STATE PLEASE PASS FCC AND FTC
STATE PLEASE ALSO PASS USTR
COMMERCE FOR NITA (CSPECK)

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: ECPS ETRD ECON EINT ETTC EZ EUN
SUBJECT: CZECHS AND THE WSIS: WHY FIX IT IF IT AIN'T BROKE?

REF: SECSTATE 196384

¶1. (U) SUMMARY: All of the Czech players involved on WSIS
echo the refrain "why fix it if it ain't broke?" and seek to
maintain the status quo on internet governance. The GOCR is
preparing to argue this point at COREPER in Brussels on 4
November, but are resigned to follow the final decision of
the EC on this issue. The Czechs are actively engaged in
bridging the digital divide through outreach, and on
transforming the country into a center for information
technology, so they are pre-disposed to close cooperation
with the U.S. on this matter. END SUMMARY

¶2. (U) Econoff met with the Ministry of Informatics Director
of the Policy and International Cooperation Department Jan
Prosik, and his WSIS action officer Antonin Chlum. They
stated bluntly that their government's preference was to
maintain the status quo on internet governance, and that they
have no problems with the existing system. They noted that
telecommunications in the Czech Republic has been labeled as
"critical infrastructure" and that the government was
unwilling to undertake any radical changes, such as EU's
proposal at the WSIS, that might effect their ability to
protect and improve this infrastructure or that might impose
additional costs.

¶3. (SBU) Nevertheless, they said that the final decision
would be in the hands of the EC, and that the COREPER meeting
would be 'very interesting.' The Czechs are going to push
publicly and privately against the suggestions of introducing
internet governance, but stated that there will likely be a
battle if the issue enters the political arena, instead of
'mere' discussion among experts. Two countries within the EU
that the GOCR is wary of are France and the UK. The GOCR
views France as a country looking for a trump card to
increase the relative strength and profile of their friend
Tunisia, and is slightly concerned that the UK, since it
holds the EU Presidency, may be willing to engage in
horse-trading on this issue to garner support for other
problems.

¶4. (U) The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which does not have
the lead on this issue but is in close coordination with the
Ministry of Informatics, is in complete agreement with the
preference for a status quo. Ales Zdimera from the MFA
Department of Internal Market and Related Policies said that
the government is speaking with one voice on this issue: as
long as it's working, there is no need to alter the current
method of internet management.

¶5. (U) The Czech Republic has a burgeoning software/IT
industry and an educational pipeline of computer-industry
workers. They also have seen a 380 percent growth rate in
internet usage over the last 5 years, which is well above
average and has led to a boom in business and media websites.
 The government, which is attempting to sell an "eGovernment"
platform for everything from business registration to tax
payments and is working hard on outreach programs
(specifically in Africa) to bridge the digital divide, is
loath to see any changes in internet management which would
potentially disrupt their plans for future success in this
area.
CABANISS